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■ HAKHEL WITH THE MELECH

As we approach the upcoming *Hakheil* year, we are reminded of the unique emphasis and great importance the Rebbe made around *Hakheil*.

Joining the masses of Chassidim spending Tishrei in the presence of the Rebbe was a remarkable experience regardless of the year you chose to come. The years of *Hakheil*, however, benefited from a unique emphasis by the Rebbe on its special mitzvah's application to the year as a whole.

In a *michtav kloli* written at the end of 5726, the Rebbe learns a lesson from the *possuk* about Hakheil, "הקהל את העם האנשים הנשים" "והטף וגרך אשר בשערך למען ישמעו וילמדו ויראו את ה' אלקיכם".

There is an aspect of this mitzvah that seems contradictory: On the one hand, the Torah stresses the need for the inclusion of each and every Jew; man, woman, and child. It makes no difference what their standing or level. All are equally a part of this gathering. Yet on the other hand, the one who reads the Torah is the king himself; the highest of all Jews.

One of the answers, the Rebbe explains, is that the Torah's purpose is to infuse life into the essence of each and every Jew. Everyone must reach a *bittul* to *Elokus* that transforms every fiber in his being. The only one who is capable of facilitating such *bittul* in every single Jew without exception, is the *melech*. Only the king can reach every Jew no matter what level he's on or where he stands spiritually.

For this reason, Chassidim over years made greater effort to be with the Rebbe during a Hakheil year, especially for Tishrei.

In fact, the Rebbe made greater emphasis on the the guests coming during a Hakheil year, more than ordinary years.

In addition to the times that coming to the Rebbe for *Hakheil* was addressed publicly in *sichos*, there were several instances that the Rebbe expressed its noteworthy significance to certain individuals privately.

It is our hope to relate these incidents in a manner that will inspire within us the preciousness of this unique time.

I assumed we would see one-another Sukkos time, (as your custom always was to come to my father-in-law, the Rebbe Shlita, for these days), and wish each other a good and happy year. Unfortunately, this year you did not come.

One of the most important aspects of aliya l'regel in the Beis Hamikdash—as far as Chassidus explains—was one's prostration before the Al-mighty. This was done not only with the guf, the external component of the person, but with the neshama, the internal, as well. This is to say, that one would submit all his faculties, intellectual and emotional, to the Eternal G-d. It is therefore understood that a shul—a mikdash me'at—that affects a greater submission than a different shul, is a closer duplication of the true experience; thus, closer to the Beis Hamikdash.

This is what a Chossid achieves by coming to his Rebbe. Every Chossid is bottul to the Rebbe on some level. When a Chossid that is a Kohen performs birkas kohanim in the presence of his Rebbe, as opposed to doing so in an ordinary beis midrash, it is more similar to nesias kappayim in the Beis Hamikdash.

(Excerpt from a letter dated Tishrei 5708)

The significant lesson of the mitzvah of Hakhel for each and every one of us is to take advantage of the opportune, awe-inspiring days of Tishrei, to gather our fellow-Jews—men, women, and children, including the very little ones—into holy places of prayer and Torah, in an atmosphere of holiness and devoutness. Gather them for the purpose which was the very essence of the mitzvah of Hakhel, as stated in the Torah: In order that they should listen and should learn, and you should fear G-d, your G-d, and observe and perform all the words of the Torah (Deut. 31:12).

(Michtov Kloli, Tishrei 5726)

For centuries, *Hakhel* was relegated to the collection of mitzvot that aren't kept while in *galus*. Biblically, the mitzvah of *Hakhel* is only in effect when all the Yidden reside in Eretz Yisroel. The Rebbe, however, taught us that the message of *Hakhel* can and must be relevant in our lives as well.

In addition to urging the Chassidim to come to the Rebbe during *Hakhel*, the Rebbe made clear that this mitzvah applies in all times and situations, and to each of us.



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The significance of Hakhel, in a spiritual sense, is that it indicates and demands the gathering of all one's thoughts, words, and deeds, in order to orientate them toward, and place them in, one's inner "Beis Hamikdash", with wholehearted submission to the King's command—the Will of Hashem.

(Excerpt of letter from 5727)

OUR PRIVILEGE AND DUTY

Reb Zalmon Jaffe and his wife would generally come to the Rebbe for the second half of Sukkos and Simchas Torah. Upon taking leave from the Rebbe after Shavuos one year, he mentioned to the Rebbe that he was looking forward to returning in time for Hoshana Rabah. The Rebbe remarked that since the upcoming year was a Hakhel year, it would be appropriate if they came for the first half of Sukkos as well, if not sooner.

In his diary, R' Zalmon reflected upon the Rebbe's remark:

"In Deuteronomy chapter five, it states that during Succos of the year after *Shemita*, the people should gather themselves in Yerushalayim—from all the corners of Eretz Yisroel. There,

the king would publicly read out certain parts from the Torah, so that people should always remember them and keep the Mitzvos.

In these days, alas, we do not possess a king in Israel. Therefore, we, the followers of the Rebbe take upon ourselves the duty and privilege of assembling together to listen to the words of Torah which are related and discussed by our leader, the Rebbe."

SEVEN YEARS - ONE HAKHEL

We get a glimpse of the great importance that the Rebbe ascribed to *Hakhel* from the following story:

During the Kinus Hashluchim of the year 5748 the Rebbe distributed kuntreisim to the shluchim. A shliach from Brazil was present and upon receiving his kuntres the Rebbe mentioned how it was nice to see him here after being absent for the past fifteen years. Being accustomed to visiting the Rebbe every two to three years, the shliach was confused by the Rebbe's words. After asking a few people for an explanation and still not receiving a satisfactory answer, he decided to ask the Rebbe the meaning of his words.



The Rebbe asked why they hadn't brought their children along. "We're shtureming about Hakhel - men women and children..."



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ANASHIM, NASHIM, VE'TAF

The Rebbe wanted people to appreciate the significance of its specialness.

In 5734, which was a Hakhel year, Rabbi Teichman came with his wife to the Rebbe. While in the Rebbe's room for yechidus, the Rebbe asked why they hadn't brought their children along. "We're shtureming about Hakhel; men, women and children..."

Along the same lines:

In Tishrei 5733, Rabbi Tuvia Blau came into yechidus. He had written in his note that he wished for all his family to one day merit coming to the Rebbe. At a certain point in the yechidus, the Rebbe addressed this and said, "The upcoming year will be Hakhel. It would be appropriate to bring your family for Tishrei, since they will then be able to take advantage of the special time to benefit from the surroundings, both internally and externally."

Indeed, the next year Rabbi Blau brought his entire family along with him. Upon entering with his wife for yechidus, the Rebbe mentioned: "We spoke in the sicha that there is reason to say that the mitzvah of Hakhel is incumbent upon the one who the people come to [i.e. the king]. I would therefore like to assist with the travel expenses".

The sicha which the Rebbe was referencing was said a few days earlier, on Shabbos Bereishis (*hemshech to Simchas Torah*). The Rebbe expounded on the halachic aspect of the mitzvah of Hakhel, whether the obligation lies on the people to come, or on the king to receive them. (Unfortunately, the *hanacha* of this sicha was lost, but some points from it were recorded in *yomanim*).

THE REBBE'S APPRECIATION

As the above story illustrates, those who did indeed make the effort to come were shown immense appreciation by the Rebbe. As the Rebbe said in a *sicha*:

"Another thing that I have requested to be publicized in connection with Zayin MarCheshvan: To extend a yasher koach to all the guests whose chassidische hergesh has illuminated their path in a revealed way, bringing to action, to fulfill the words of the possuk "lech lecho meiartzecho" in order to be in the daled amos—shul and beis midrash—of the nossi hador, the [Frierdiker] Rebbe, during the time of Hakhel [during Sukkos], even for at least an hour, a day, and especially those who were here during the entire Sukkos, especially those who stayed until the Seventh of MarCheshvan..."

Again we see the Rebbe's emphasis on the importance of being in the Rebbe's *daled amos* especially during *Hakhel*.

Let us all utilize this special opportune time to fulfill all the Rebbe's *horoas* regarding *Hakhel*; gathering Yidden and strengthening the *ליראה את ה'*, as well as revitalizing our connection with our *melech*. And may we merit to fulfill the mitzvah of *Hakhel* in the literal sense this year! **D**

On one of his letters he received back from the Rebbe the following was written:

"Regarding what I said about not seeing you for fifteen years, this comes in relation to what I've been speaking about lately at great length, about Hakhel, and in connection with the last two Hakhels [i.e. he had not been by the Rebbe during those Hakhel years]. You should be mevatel this chazakah by your visit now."

Indeed, upon investigation, it turned out that from the year 5719 till the year 5748 he had missed two Hakhel years.